



All of us need to make time for self care. Not because something is wrong with us. It's important for you to stay in touch with you- body, mind and spirit, No one knows you like you. No one can know when things feel a bit off balance but you. Our self-care time allows us to take care of fine-tuning so that we can thrive.

We tend to live in our heads but your body is so much more than a robot to cart your brain thru life. These practices help us get in touch with our bodies. It is my hope that you can approach your physical self as well as your emotional and spiritual self with love and compassion, with caring and concern. We are most empowered when we learn to live in the world as physical, thoughts and spirit all working together. One is not better than the other. Our spirit can't accomplish what it came here to do without jumping into that body. And our physical self, our body and mind can't be its best without the metaphysical, the spirit working in union.

The practices we'll explore today are easy, fun and enjoyable. I hope you resonate with one or two and you might consider incorporating them into your regular self-care plan. Some of these skills are just handy to have on board if you're having a stressful day, or a restless night.

Please remember that you are in charge of how you do these practices. We all come with different flexibility, strength and stamina. Wherever you are is perfect... but only you know how you're feeling. So be a good coach and don't push too hard. Don't be afraid to say, "I can't do that."

Let's go have some fun!

Mindful check-in

The check-in is a mindfulness practice intended dial up your awareness of what's going on with you in this moment. We will do a lot of different practices today. This is the one that's most important, the perfect to begin with and it's easy.

First pause, take a deep breath and notice your thoughts. In mindfulness, we explore the idea of becoming an observer of our thoughts. An observer is like a reporter, stepped back a bit from the action and just noticing the facts. A weather reporter isn't telling you about a storm while screaming and looking panicked. They are in a safe place in the storm and noticing facts they can share. When you notice your thoughts this way, you don't have to jump in the deep end with them. You and your thoughts are separate. So, as an observer, notice what you're thinking about and then Turn your attention to the rest of you... what's going on in the rest of your body.

Do a quick assessment of how you're doing- how is your body, your emotions, your mood? If you detect something wrong, painful, challenging then acknowledge that fact.

Give yourself a bit of self compassion for what's going on. Remind yourself that challenges, struggles, suffering are just sometimes part of life and not a punishment nor are they the result of something you did wrong. You're not "bad," you're just hurting.

Plan how to address your challenge. Tired? Get a nap, or a brisk walk or do some energizing breathing.

So self care means- notice what's going on, don't beat yourself up, plan some solutions.



Technique-

Make a commitment to set aside a few minutes every day to build the habit of checking in. Maybe you want to do it over morning coffee, during your shower, on the drive to work or perhaps sitting in the car before you head in to your workday.

1. Take a breath, pause and turn your attention within. Most of our day, our focus is on what's going on around us. We are bombarded with news, opinions, direction, requests from outside of ourselves. This is time to look for what's going on inside.
2. Take a deep breath, pause then release it slowly. Breathing a bit more deeply and especially exhaling slowing signals your body physiology that everything is okay. Your body, not your mind can then dial back stress response so get your nervous system on board to calm down.
3. Turn your attention within. Scan your body for tension. Step back as an observer or reporter and assess your thoughts and your actions. Check in on how you're feeling. No judgment, just observing- are you tired, irritable, anxious?
4. Give yourself a bit of comfort. Imagine your best friend just described that she/he was experiencing what you are. You might suggest for them to take a break, get out for some fresh air or a little exercise, give yourself a hug, plan something special later in the evening. Then you suggest similarly helpful caring advice for yourself.

Checking in helps us be aware of what's going on for us and hopefully make corrections so the day goes more smoothly. No, self-compassion is often not our nature. We are called to be compassionate towards others. Learning to direct compassion to yourself is a very important skill. We live in a critical world so the last thing you need to be is self-critical.

Imagine you are feeling tired. Perhaps you stayed up too late or maybe you just didn't sleep well. A self-critic might be tempted say, "You bozo! you know better than to binge-watch on a weeknight." Here's your call to begin treating yourself at least as well as you treat your friends. Practice talking to yourself in the same tone and the same kind words that you use to comfort a dear friend. Try it... a good habit to form.

Breathwork

Breathing is part of self-care. Yes. Becoming more aware of how you are breathing and choosing to change your breath is part of caring for your wellness. Each breath in, we receive oxygen and energy. Each breath out, we release the waste gasses and any tensions, worries or whatever we might be able to loosen our grip on.

There are physical aspects to breathing— expansion of chest and belly, release of muscle tension on the exhale. There are also emotional connections to breathing. When we are stressed, our shoulders tense, our breathing becomes shallow, our mind becomes more fixated, managing one or two items at a time. When we begin to relax— our breathing slows and deepens, our muscles can begin to loosen, we regain the ability to think in “big picture” terms. So as emotions change, our breathing patterns change. However, what if I told you that how you choose to breathe can create an emotion in you? A study done in 2010 (1) explored how the act of breathing in a particular way can create an emotion in the breather. This research confirmed that merely breathing in described way can cause a desired emotion. So if you can't call in the emotion, you can choose to change how you breathe and the emotion arises in you, bringing energy that matches that emotion..

Now, who here hasn't done any of a number of things to change how you're feeling emotionally or physically? Let's list some of the things we do to change our moods or energy levels. We nap. We eat. We ingest alcohol or coffee depending which way we wish to move our energy and mood. We run. We do drugs. We have emotional outbursts. We hike. We hug trees. We shop. We drive too fast. We have sex. We fantasize. We cry. Others?

Some of these choices are healthy, some are not. Some are good for our body, some are not. Today we're going to experience how simply the act of breathing can help us shift our mood, our energy level. Now we have another choice... change how we are breathing! The options here are vast but in our short time together, I'm going to give you 2 very simple breathing styles- one to calm and one to energize.

Note: Changing our breathing patterns consciously is a direct link to emotions. So, sometimes in these breathing practices you might feel emotions rising. You might have the urge to cry, to laugh, to shiver, feel tingling... those are emotions being released. At any time, if you feel uncomfortable with these practices or with physical or emotional sensations, just return to normal breathing.

Calming breath

We've all said, "Just take a deep breath and relax." It's more than just a nice thing to say. Our bodies are physiologically wired for deep breathing to be the sign that it's time to relax—there's no danger, no need to keep our guard up. When anxious or busy, we often just breathe with the top of our lungs, using chest muscles to expand the ribs and draw air in. Deeper breathing brings the diaphragm into the picture. As it moves down, the abdomen expands and the full capacity of the lungs are used. Often this breathing is called belly breathing. Use it as needed any time. This calming breath is a powerful tool, and always on hand.

A long exhale is as important as a deeper breath in signaling your body's nervous system that we're safe and can relax. You never want to make breathing uncomfortable, or make yourself tense so practice these longer exhales as is comfortable to you.

Technique

First, start with a mindful check-in. Note how you're feeling. Try breathing in to a count of four (for example) then exhale to a count of 5 or 6. Keep breathing, calming, relaxing and you'll find with a bit of time and practice, you can comfortably exhale to a count of 7, 8 or more. If it's hard for you to exhale slowly, try pursing your lips, as if you're blowing through a milk shake straw.

Practice for a few minutes and check in again to see how you feel.



Energizing breathing

This breathing technique may be used first thing in the morning to boost your alertness, energy, and focus for the day. Alternatively you can practice this exercise anytime throughout the day when you're feeling lethargic or tired.

Technique

Check in with how you are feeling. Begin inhaling for 6 counts thru the nose if you can, expand belly then chest. Then exhale in 2 counts through the nose. Repeat, In and out thru the nose. Then after a minute, if you want more, shift this hard exhale to breathing out the mouth. Repeat 4 breathes, then back to normal breathing. This one builds energy which you may feel as a tingle or buzzy feeling. You must be the coach for yourself in this. If you begin feeling uncomfortable, immediately just go back to normal breathing.

1- Research on breathing style creating emotional response- Respiratory feedback in the generation of emotion, September 2010, Cognition and Emotion August 01(5):605-627
Authors: Pierre Philippot, Université Catholique de Louvain - UCLouvain, Gaëtane Chapelle, Sylvie Blairy, University of Liège

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/232965660_Respiratory_feedback_in_the_generation_of_emotion



Self-Massage

Massages work muscles- increasing circulation which allows muscles to release toxins and relax. When we talk about self- massage, many people recall how tiring it can be on hands and arms to massage another person's shoulders. So... no, we're not doing that. (Grin.)

Let's start gently. You do what feels right. Begin with a check-in. How are your body, mind and spirit feeling? Now begin.

1- Open arms wide, reaching far out to sides and back enough to feel chest open. Then cross arms in front, bring hands to opposite shoulders for a little hug. While hugging, lean left shoulder towards right knee... just a bit for a stretch, Then lean right shoulder to left knee. Gently drop right ear towards right shoulder and take a nice calming breath, Move left ear towards left shoulder and take a calming breath. Note which arm is on top and repeat all the above, crossing opposite arm on top. This can be done seated or standing.

2- Rest left arm on right thigh. Reach across body with other arm and firmly rub palm up and down arm, shoulder to wrist and back up. Repeat as feels nice. We're raising circulation and moving energy, both which are relaxing to the muscles. Repeat on other arm.

Now arms, neck and shoulders are warmed up a bit.

3- Take right palm to the front of left shoulder and rub circles or tap gently on upper chest, 7 times. Then raise left arm and rub armpit and down the side of the breast. Repeat on opposite side. . Wonderful for lymphatics

4- Reach hands up to sides of your neck and rub firmly but gently on sides and back of neck. Pause when your fingertips are back near spine and press fingers into those tight muscles and pull forward, just to sides of neck, not to front. Repeat this 3-4 times. Releases tension.

5- Do some gentle circles on side of the neck, right under the ear lobe, moving to gentle strokes behind and in front of the ear. Repeat as feels good. Stimulates vagus nerve and releases tension in cranial muscles.

6. Place palms on face down by jawline and gently stroke up, lifting, lightening your facial tension. Let a gentle smile spread across your face.

7. This one's a bit easier to do standing or in an armless chair. Inhale fully while you reach up as high as is comfortable, shoulders back, chest open. Then exhale letting arms fall, allowing shoulders to round and head to move a bit forward. Try letting out an audible sigh as you drop arms and bow. Repeat 3-4 times (or more if you're loving it). Wonderful somatic and emotional stress releaser.
8. Tapping or patting.- Use fingertips to tap top of head, all around skull, gently on face if you wish and sides of neck. Tap top of shoulders, one side at a time, if you can reach over the shoulder to tap upper back. Repeat on other side. Both hands, tap across collar bone and up and down sternum (bone in center of chest.) Tap or rub on ribs on your sides and under breasts. Flatten your hands and rub your belly. It's your belly and whether it's your favorite part of your body or not, it deserves your love. Start on lower left, circle up and over and down on right. Repeat that two or three times, then big circles in the opposite direction. Love that belly. We hold not only wisdom there but also there are emotional connections there. Just offer your belly a bit of love.
9. Pat or rub both palms on low back, then sides then front of hip down to top of leg. There's lots of lymphatics, muscles and circulatory stuff in this area and when we sit all day, we're folding all those systems that need to move and flow.
10. Tap on fronts of thigh, down to knees, down as far as you can go comfortably, then tap back up the backs of legs. If you need more stability, do this seated and come up the sides of legs. This stimulates circulation and the nervous system in lower body.
11. While standing, gently bounce. You're not jumping. Feet stay on floor, bending knees gently. Let arms be loose and bounce too. Continue for a minute or whatever feels nice. Steady yourself with the back of the chair if you need to. Great for circulation and lymphatic system.
12. Sit down. Rub palms together until you feel warm and cup hands over your closed eyes. It's really quite restful for the eyes and a nice way to close our your massage.
13. Take a few calming breaths and do another mindful check-in with yourself. You have been moving but hopefully we kept it slow and easy. The massage stimulates the body with minimal exertion so should leave you feeling awake but relaxed.

Reflexology

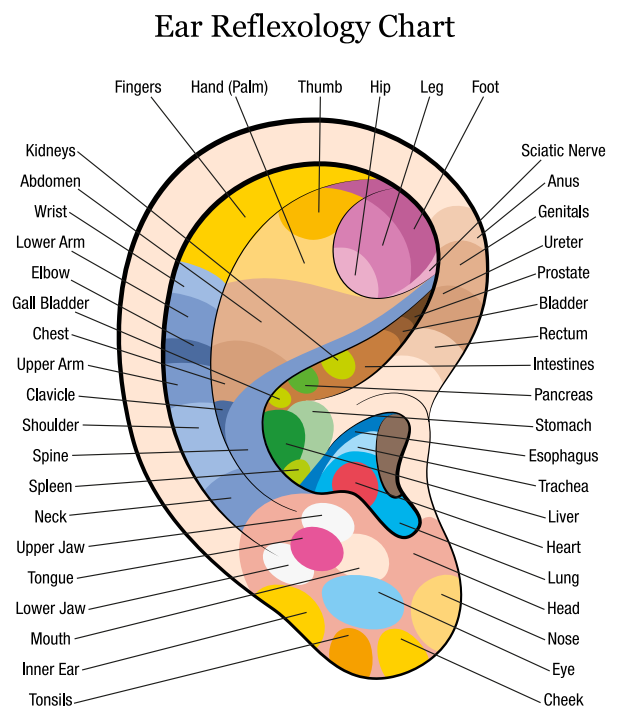
Reflexology is an ancient practice thought to have been passed down through an oral tradition. It was first recorded as a pictograph on the Egyptian tomb of Ankhamor in 2330 BC along with other medical procedures.

The concept of reflexology teaches that there are 3 microsystems- a small local representation of the whole body on a smaller part of the body. These microsystems include your ears, your hands and your feet. While the acupuncturist uses points on your energy system all over your body, in essence, they could access any part of the body by working on just hands, feet or ears. This practice is very intricate and complex however, for our purposes, you will find it quite simple.

Reflexology as a more modern practice evolved in the early 1900's. Initially referred to as Zone therapy. The real development of reflexology was by Eunice Ingham and it was she who named this complementary therapy. As a physiotherapist, Ingham was introduced to Zone Therapy. From here, her fascination and extensive research developed to the creation of the mapping of the feet and hands we see and use today.

I am teaching you a very simplified method of using the reflexology points in self-care. I learned these practices from Roger Jahnke. His book "The Healer Within" is a wonderful resource in learning more simple and effective self-care practices.

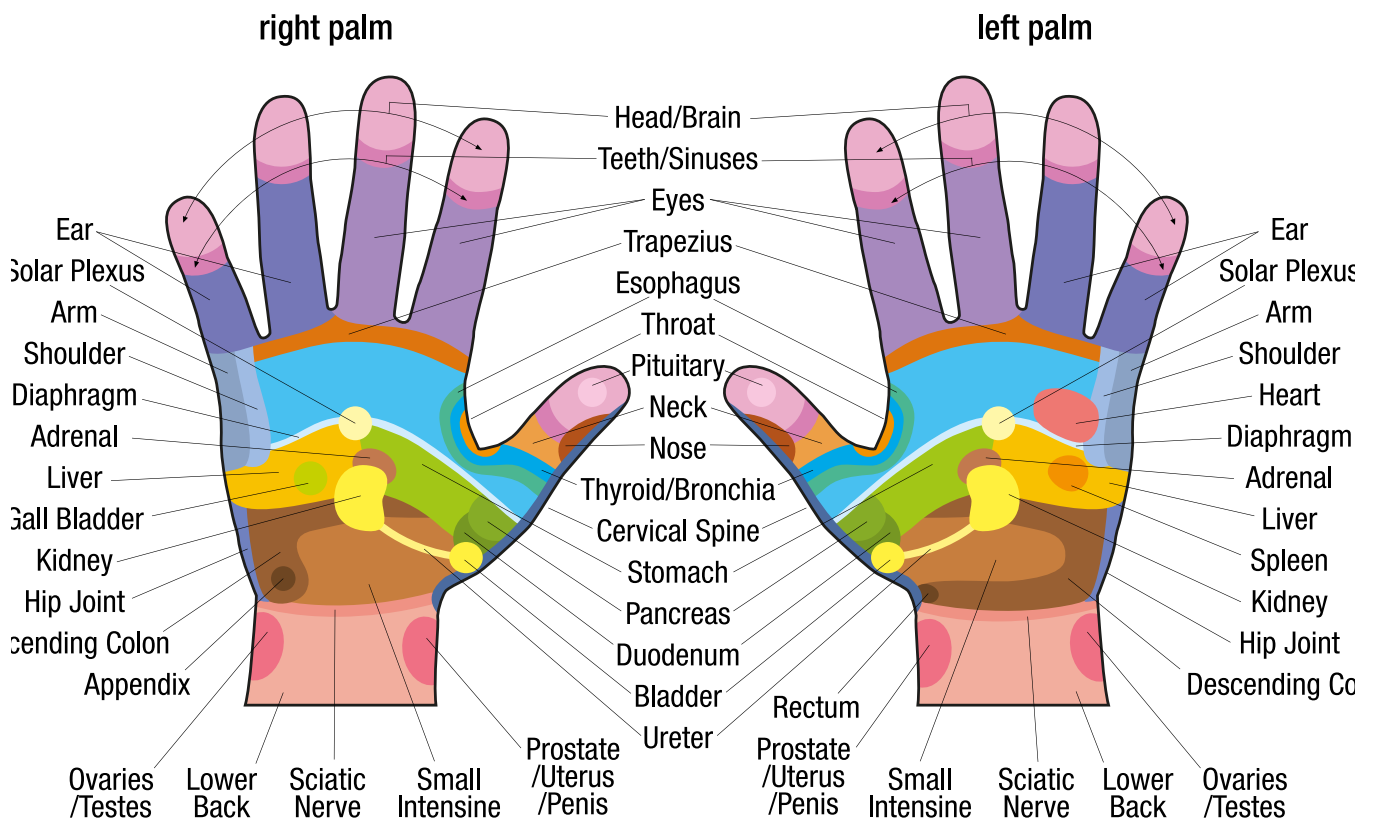
In our practice today, we'll work on our hands but the same practices can be done on feet or ears. If I have time in the morning, I start on ears, then go to hands then feet as part of waking my body up. Take a few minutes to look at this hand illustration on the next page.



Notice some of the labels on this illustration. Sinuses at the pads of the fingers. Find the eyes and ears on fingers. Go all the way to the base of the hand and notice where the colon is. See the differences between the hands. On the outer edge of the right hand is the liver but the same location on the left hand is the heart. Find the low back. We do not need to learn these points. But if you have an issue with a body part, make note of one or two of those.

We are going to apply pressure to our hands with thumbs, with fingertips, by kneading, rubbing them with our knuckles- whatever feels right to you. If you continue to do this practice, you will find your hand strength grows, which is a sweet side effect. As you rub over your hands, starting with finger tips and moving towards wrists, notice any area that is sore. Now if you have arthritis in your hands, those pains will be there but might also like a nice, loving rub. Before we begin, once again check-in with yourself. Practice, practice, practice.

Hand Reflexology Chart



Technique

1. Rub your palms together while taking some nice calming breaths.
2. Place finger tips of both hands together, apply gentle pressure and just move those finger tips gently against each other. You are stimulating sinuses. Now take one hand and rub the pads on each finger of the opposite hand. Work down each finger, rubbing top and bottom of fingers. Rub gently at the base of all the fingers. You are just looking for sore spots. When you find them, linger on those sore spots a bit. You might inhale, imagine you're inhaling healing energy and allow it to flow into that tender spot you've found.
3. Use fingertips of one hand to rub up and down on the back of the opposite hand. This area can be sensitive. We're just energizing and increasing blood flow.
4. Use thumb or your knuckles to massage the palm of your hand. Explore what feels good. Find any pain, then gently rub that area or around the area if it's very sensitive. Inhale qi and visualize the energy flowing to that spot.
5. Continue exploring and moving your hand, wrist, fingers as you wish.
6. Switch hands and repeat.

As you're beginning, you might look at the chart to see areas you want to rub but in time, I just try to move all parts of my fingers, palms, front and back of hands and wrists. Repeat all that on the opposite hand. I like to tap the valleys between my fingers together, left hand sliding into right hand. Then roll and stretch my wrists. When you find a sore spot, stop and take some time with it. Breathing in and out, releasing tension and any energy from that sore spot you can. I see this as maintenance so I'm not particularly interested in what organ is tied to which sore spot but you might want to look at the chart as you work as it's interesting.

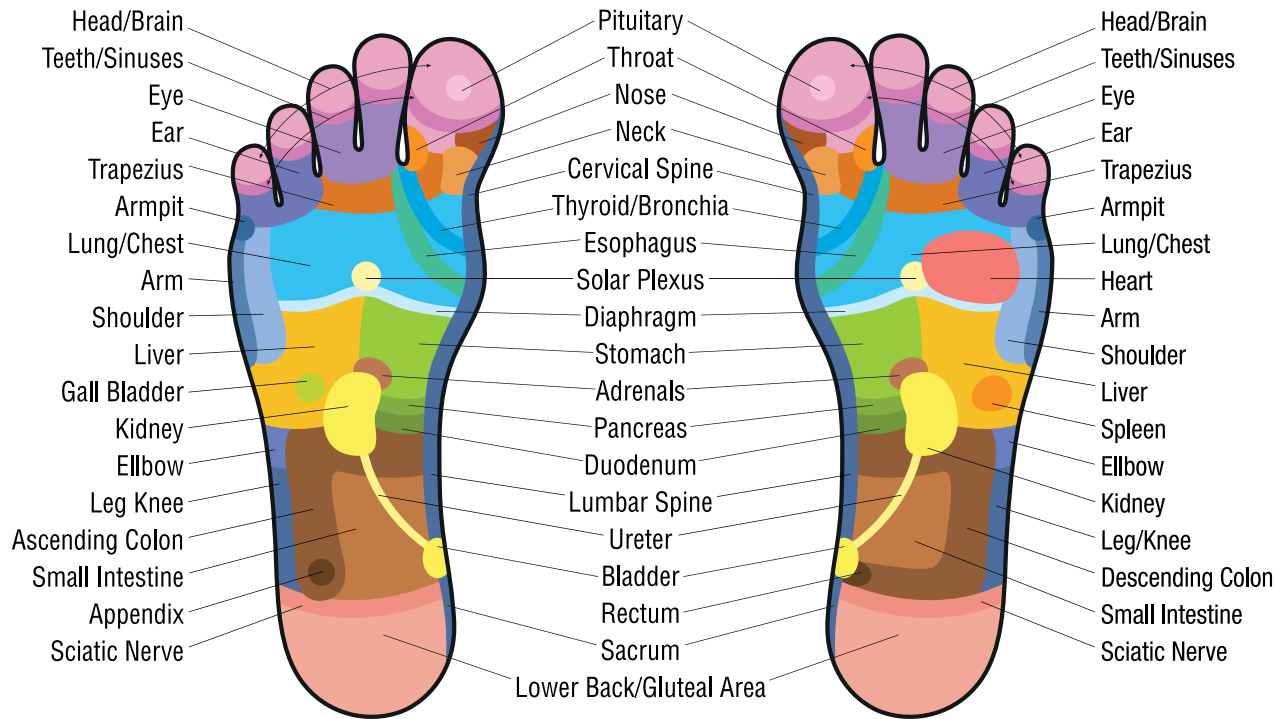
Some notes on ears.

The technique is the same for feet and ears. Our ears however, are sensitive so treat them gently. You'll also notice when working on the ears that they get hot. This heat is due to increases circulation, which also happens in hands and feet but there's little muscle, fat and tendons in the ears so you feel the heat more. Some think that heat is indicative that there is more energy available to go to the areas of the body that might need them. Massaging ears can be a nice wake up practice if you enjoy it.

Foot Reflexology Chart

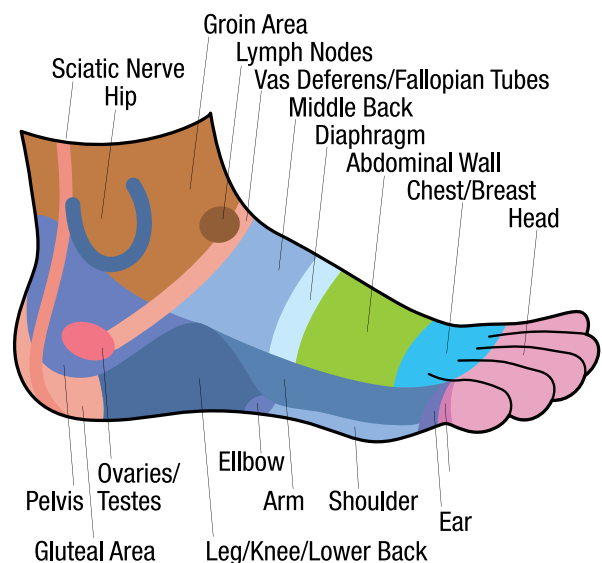
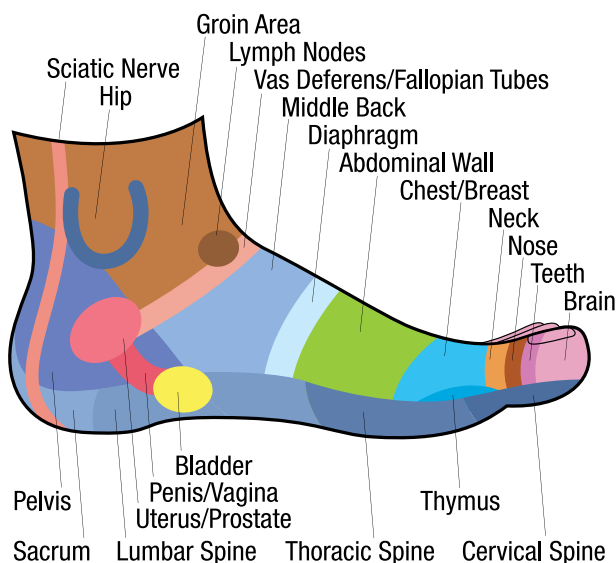
right sole

left sole



medial side of both feet

lateral side of both feet



Sound as self-care

Sound can be a very complex thing to describe. The physics of it, the measurement of it can seem very technical. But the experience of it is simple and that's where I plan to stay in our conversation today. Simplicity is generally what works for all of us, at least for me.

Life is about vibration. Our bodies vibrate... each cell has a frequency. Some believe there is a healthy vibration / frequency for each of us. And when an organ or system is not healthy, it is vibrating at a different frequency. Apply the right sounds, and the organ could correct itself and return to full health. I believe when given a range of pleasant vibrations, the body will pull in exactly what it needs.

Resonance and entrainment both describe our interactions with sound. Resonance is defined as vibrating at a full and pleasing sound. Some things in life resonate with you- they fit, suit or please you. Entrainment is the phenomenon that occurs when one object is vibrating and it causes a nearby object to vibrate in the same way. A slow, smooth drum beat can have a calming effect on you and actually lower pulse and blood pressure. Some people use a particular frequency in music to encourage brainwaves to shift from a more active to a more calm state. One vibrating tuning fork if struck can make another fork vibrate along with it.

So in a nutshell, applying sound might be calming, soothing, pleasing, energizing or healthy for our minds and bodies. So how do we know what frequency is right one for our bodies to be healthy and light? Simple- trust your body.

It is very common to teach beginning sound healers that there is a particular frequency for this chakra or that organ. In my experience (and I'm not saying that teaching is incorrect) we humans are very changeable beings. Our bodies likely vibrate differently when we're tired, over-caffeinated, dehydrated. Our bodies change with temperature, barometric pressure and the phase of the moon. In my experience, people react differently to specific sounds every time I see them. However, the body is an amazing healer. It is also very wise. The body, when exposed to an array of sounds will resonate with just what it needs and will pull those needed vibrations in.

So, trust your reaction to sounds. Some will feel harmonious and some will will a bit chaotic but relax into them all and visualize your wise body drawing in exactly what you need.

Our body's also resonate to our own voices. Our voices are tuned to connect with our bodies. So use your lovely voice to your advantage but speaking kindly to yourself Try repeating after me, "I'm okay. I'm okay, I'm okay, I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine, Everything is fine." Try these phrases with hands on upper chest , patting your upper arms in a little hug or tapping your breast bone, "I'm okay, it will be okay, let it go, etc" Let's ponder for a moment or two, thinking about positive things you could say to yourself to comfort and heal.

Beyond just speaking, there is more ways to creating your own vibrations with your voice. Some of you love to sing but those who don't are likely able to hum. Humming is very self-soothing and a powerful healing tool. In "The Humming Effect: Sound Healing for Health and Happiness" author and sound healer Jonathan Goldman, who has taught toning and tuning forks for decades now also is suggesting humming.. So hum for your health. If it's hard at first for you to hum, relax a bit. You likely haven't done it for awhile. Breathe in deeply, then hum. Any note will do. Then breathe deeply and hum again. Notice the vibration the sound creates in your throat and up into your head. Experiment by closing your nose... now we know that to hum requires a clear nose. But it also shows that this vibration is going up into your nasal passages and all the bones of your head.

Your voice vibrates your brain. It should be a really good thing. So maybe the next time you're stuck in traffic, trying adding a hum to the exhale of your calming breath- breathe and hum... breathe and hum. Perhaps think of it when doing the dishes or taking a walk. See how creating this vibration helps ground and center you. Most anyone can do it. In class, we do a



group humming practice- high, low, midrange. Where in the body does it vibrate? Which feels most soothing to you. Explore humming and imagining you are directing the sound to an area of your body that needs help.

There are many ways to use sound to comfort and heal. Use pleasing, calming music as part of your self-care program. Consider instruments you might already have: drums, bells, native American flute, wind chimes, singing bowls. These are instruments are all comforting and require no special training. Consider using sound as a part of your self care and you'll be surprised at the results.



Meditation

Meditation always means keeping our mind in the moment. Our mindful check-in is a form of meditation as it calls us to focus our minds in this moment. Normally your mind wanders about half of the time. So when you first ask it to behave differently, it can feel a bit challenging. You ask the mind to stay in this moment with you but often it's replaying something hard that happened in the past, or focuses on worrying about something coming in the future. Remember this... while your mind is in the past or future, you are totally ineffective. Plus you're missing out on opportunities that the present... your real life gives you. In the present moment, you can take action. When you're worrying about the future or replaying past frustrations, you are totally ineffective. So, stay in the present and make things happen!!

Become an observer

We talked a bit at the beginning about becoming an observer of our minds. Practicing that helps you learn that you and your thoughts are two different things. Thoughts can pass by like clouds in the sky if we choose to let them. It's when we dive into the worry pit with them that we feel so overwhelmed.

Meditation allows you to observe what your brain is doing, see where it is wandering and make decisions to redirect it to better serve your purposes. When stressors set in, you as an observer can step back, pause, breathe then choose how you wish to respond to a given situation. Without developing the skills to observe the mind, we can feel like our brain runs off and we have no control over it. You have a much greater chance of success in times of change by learning how to observe and direct the mind. Meditation helps you do that.

Meditation can also ask us to keep our mind focused on what activity you are doing in this moment. Meditating while walking in the woods- asking the mind to notice the variety of trees or shades of green in the plants. Try meditating while doing the dishes- appreciating the warm water and the lovely colors in soap bubbles. Listening to healing sounds gives our mind a focal point. Practicing staying in the moment allows us to view thoughts as an observer and also allows us to explore our own deeper thoughts or inner wisdom.

In conclusion

Mindfulness, meditation and self care practices are always tough when we start out. I think we want to believe these are some magical wonders that will offer us immediate relief from stress, anxiety and other struggles. But the truth is that all of these practices feel unnatural at the beginning. We are learning new habits. Any new habit takes time and gentle repetition before these new behaviors can work their wonders for us.

Today you learned some tools. This handout can help you remember details about ones that you enjoyed. If nothing else, I hope you got to experience the beauty of connecting the power you carry in body, mind AND spirit. Those aspects of self are all extra amazing when used together. Pause, breathe and take really good care of you. Thanks for joining me.



Your guide

Suni Moon- A creative, transformative guide sharing ancient practices in new ways to soothe and awaken body, mind and spirit.



Since I was young, I've been on a quest to learn. My mission is to remember and understand the mystical world- seeking insight into mysteries beyond ordinary human knowledge. I've studied sacred writings of many traditional religions, shared in Lakota ceremonies, trekked thru the Andes to learn from descendants of the Incas. I've trained in many healing modalities- energy healing, sound therapy, massage, qigong and more. I've followed the Yogic path beyond the poses to go deeply into meditation and breathwork. I've worked with gurus, shamans and wise men and women all over the world. I've wandered deep into mother nature learning to listen to the trees and receive power from the earth below and the sun and moon above.

Thru all this exploration, I look for simple truths common to many paths. I embrace the power of sound, the wonder of meditation, the strength of our breath and the essential need for self-care on a daily basis. These ancient tools are presented in new ways that suit the energy of our times. I share these tools with you to help you expand, awaken, heal, calm and explore the wonder of the unseen, the less known world.

The most important truth I've learned is that higher wisdom, connection to spirit, awakening, enlightenment isn't something you get from someone else. You came with all that built into you. Life in a world wrapped in fear and greed didn't likely help you find that message. In today's changing world, in the new energies here to help elevate our world- the wisdom, the light you seek is within you. The simple practices I teach are intended to help you connect your physical you and the higher self. That can happen easily and, it grows with practice. The practices are easy and they bring you what you need. Just looking for some hope, or calmness- then you'll find tools here that will help. If you're seeking higher wisdom or to journey to other energetic worlds, that is available to you also.

Suni is located in Milwaukee and does work one-on-one with clients at her studio. Visit [SuniMoon.net](https://www.SuniMoon.net) for more info. Also visit <https://www.ThisJourney.us> where you'll find online resources, more workshops and community.